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## Odd Couple Urges Tax Hike To Protect School Spending

By JONDI GUMZ

WATSONVILLE — About 400 Watsonville High School students skipped class Friday afternoon to get a lesson in real-life politics, crowding the cafeteria to hear state Treasurer Phil Angelides and Princeton University professor Cornel West, who wrote the bestseller "Race Matters."

The two men made an odd couple, Angelides looking like he belonged on Wall Street and West sporting a big, throwback Afro. Both grew up in Sacramento and met as freshmen at Harvard; they have kept in touch for 34 years.

Their visit to Watsonville is part of Angelides' ongoing campaign to reshape the state-budget discussion. This week he made stops throughout the state, from UCLA to Chico State University and San Diego City College, urging lawmakers to consider a tax increase to avoid education-spending cuts.

So far, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has stuck with his position of no new taxes, but Angelides is convinced legislators, who must approve the budget, will change their minds once they hear from students like Eder Tostado, Jenny Gama and Oscar Flores.

The three seniors are among dozens of students at Watsonville High coached by UC counselors on how to get into college. The UC outreach programs cost about \$2 million statewide. They involve tutoring in algebra, explaining college requirements, reviewing for college entrance exams and paying the exam fees.

Since UC counselor Tania Soria began keeping track of potential UC applicants at Watsonville High three years ago, the number of students enrolling at UC has doubled, from 14 to 30. Soria, a Watsonville alum, said she is willing to pay higher taxes for outreach because "you'll have more college graduates and more money coming back into the economy."

Tostado, one of the county's top high school runners, hadn't considered college until last year. UC counselor Rico Dominguez, 28, told him about the outreach services, and explained it was not too late.

"It turned my whole world around," said Tostado, who has applied to seven colleges, including UC Davis.

Gama plays soccer and has given up TV to focus on academics. She's already been accepted at San Jose State and is waiting to hear from UC Davis, UCLA and UC Berkeley.

"I'm proud of her," said her mom, who learned English to help her daughter in school. "She'll be the first (in our family) to go to college. We all deserve the same opportunity."

Flores said Watsonville High's six counselors are responsible for 3,100 students and are always busy.

"The UC counselors make our dreams come true," he said, explaining how he called Rico at 10 p.m. for help meeting a scholarship deadline. "When I graduate, I'll come back to help."

Angelides complimented Flores on his remarks, encouraging him to come to Sacramento to speak with legislators.

"You're very eloquent," he said. "I couldn't have done it at your age."

The charismatic West mesmerized students, dropping the names of author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, playwright Nilo Cruz and activist Cesar Chavez.

"You must define who you are," he said. "You all are the future."

And he didn't speak down to them, but tossed around such words as "bequeath," "proclivities" and "self-lacerating."

Lizette Bedolla, a senior who had a friend take her photo with West, said she was inspired.

"We could organize ourselves," she said. "We could go to the state and fight for these programs. We could win this."